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## **Approved Kansas Medicaid changes will improve Kansas health services**

Kansas has received approval from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on a broad-reaching waiver application designed to improve public mental health, behavioral health and substance abuse services and resolve pending CMS concerns.

In June, on behalf of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) submitted a comprehensive package of Medicaid changes for mental health services.

The centerpiece of the changes was a selective services contracting waiver application, which will allow Kansas to designate primary contractors for public mental health and substance abuse services, and coordinate all care through those contractors while methodically building the provider network. CMS has approved that waiver during its initial review period, effective July 1, 2007.

"I applaud the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services for the level of preparation and diligence in this matter to develop and secure this waiver to ensure that Kansas will be back in compliance with the federal government. More importantly, we are encouraged by this effort to streamline our mental health services and improve the quality of care we give to Kansans," said Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Executive Director of KHPA.

CMS recently had expressed significant concerns about whether the longstanding focus of Kansas' mental health service system on community mental health centers could be resolved with the standard Medicaid requirement to pay for services provided by "any willing provider," even if those providers operated completely independent of mental health centers. With this waiver approval, concerns by CMS about "any willing provider" will be resolved, giving Kansas the ability to efficiently manage these public health care services and contain associated costs.

Dr. Gary Daniels, Secretary of SRS, applauded the CMS decision, as a good example of a strong partnership between Kansas and the federal Medicaid oversight agency. "This Kansas-developed solution is good for citizens in need of these critical services," Daniels said.

The approval of this waiver has several benefits, including:

- Preserving the infrastructures that Kansas stakeholders have built for these services;
- Developing an integrated and coordinated portal to public mental health and substance abuse services;
- Increasing access to Medicaid for qualified providers through associate/sub-contracting agreements;
- Expanding consumer choice of qualified providers;
- Controlling the increase of costs for Medicaid services; and
- Allowing the reinvestment of savings back into the program.

The approved plan is expected to enhance accessibility to services and increase the efficiency of the services that are provided.

KHPA submitted the waiver on behalf of SRS because it is designated in Kansas statute as the single agency responsible for the state's Medicaid program in dealings with the Federal government, which funds 60 percent of the program.

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